

Who's laughing now?

Humor as Resistance and Oppression in U.S. American Culture

10th Annual Students and Graduate Conference • HU Berlin • November 10-12, 2011

Call for Papers

Humor is just another defense against the universe.

— Mel Brooks

Taking up Mel Brooks's view of humor, this year's students and graduate conference will regard humor as a discursive strategy which can be used to communicate, reify, transgress, and negotiate political, cultural, and social differences. The focus of this conference will be on U.S. American traditions and forms of humor that can be found in media as diverse as literature, film, television, radio, newspapers, and the Web.

Given the omnipresence of comedy shows, sitcoms or political satires as well as the popularity of comedy as a literary and filmic genre, we hope to attract a variety of original contributions to humor in its multiple manifestations.

Humor can be used to exert power over others by turning them into laughingstocks, making them appear ridiculous, and thereby silencing them. In contrast, humor can also be a potent strategy to expose power, to question and subvert it. Humor can be a brutal weapon that masks its violence under the guise of 'just being funny,' but it can also destabilize existing power relations and hierarchies.

In this conference, we hope to explore how, why, and to what effect humor is employed in U.S. American culture. What is humor? Why are certain things funny while others are not? What can humor accomplish

Please submit your abstracts for presentation till August 31, 2010.

A current list of topics already covered, the preliminary program as well as further information can be found on the conference web site:

www2.hu-berlin.de/amerika/asc/humor

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This conference is sponsored and supported by the American Studies Program and the IES



and what are its limits? Who is supposed to laugh about whom? Who is not laughing? Who has the last laugh?

In the light of these questions, possible topics may encompass but are not limited to:

- genres and traditions of humor in U.S. American culture
- politically correct!? – the politics of humor, humor and politics
- limits and transgressions of humor
- www.humor.com – humor on the web and in other media
- humor and irony after 9/11
- theories of humor.

We would like to invite M.A. and PhD students, as well as professionals in the field to present 15-minute papers and engage in lively discussions.



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